

# Uncle Sam's Smallest Principality

All About the Ten-Mile Strip Which Borders The Panama Canal.

By FRANK G. CARPENTER.

**Its Queer Population and How It Is Ruled—A Land of Many Races and Many Countries—How Law and Order Are Kept—The Jails and the Culebra Penitentiary—Keeping Out the White Slaves—Something About the Courts, the Public Works and the Schools—A Chat With Governor Thatcher.**

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Ancon, Canal Zone, Panama. I have just had a long talk with Gov. M. H. Thatcher, the man who, under the President and chairman of the commission, is the ruler of the little principality which Uncle Sam runs on the Isthmus of Panama. His territory is the Canal Zone, a little strip of land ten miles wide and about fifty miles long, extending from one side of the Isthmus of Panama to the other. This strip is winding and it runs back five miles on each side of our great canal. It contains altogether just about half as much land as Rhode Island, and its population is not far from that of Nevada, which is more than fifty times as large.

Just now this strip is the liveliest of all of Uncle Sam's dominions. It has a more cosmopolitan population, and it is doing more work than any other. It is a beehive of activity from one end to the other, and millions of dollars are being shoveled into it in the many forms of construction which will make the completed canal.

The strip is one of cities and towns. It is one of railroads and shipping. It is a social center of about 10,000 high class Americans, and the great workshop where something like 60,000 negroes and mulattoes from this part of the world are earning the highest wages they have ever made in their lives. It is a country of post offices, telegraphs and schools. It has its criminal classes, and also its churches, preachers and Sunday school teachers. It has its public works and its fire departments, its courts and its prisons, and, in short, almost all the machinery of any of our States or territories.

## A Chat With the Governor.

I met the Governor in his beautiful residence on the slope of Ancon Hill right under our great administration building, and facing the big educational institute which the Panama government has just constructed. The building was erected under the direction of Senator Joe Blackburn, who was Governor Thatcher's predecessor, and it is one of the pleasant homes of the Isthmus. Wide verandas, veiled in wire gauze to keep out the mosquitoes, run around its two stories, and the walls of these are hung with the most beautiful orchids gathered from the woods of the zone. Governor Thatcher says that according to science there are altogether 12,000 varieties of orchids and of these it seems to me Mrs. Thatcher must have the most beautiful. I cannot begin to describe them or their exquisite flowers. Some burst out in a shower of bloom, and others have blossoms which take on the form of miniature birds, animals and some even looking like humans. One variety that she has is the *Espiritu Santo*. It is called the flower of the Holy Spirit, and rightly so, for its petals are of the shape of a white, beautiful dove with outstretched wings looking from the pure, lily-white flower.

It was seated among these orchids that we talked. The conversation turned to the character of the zone, and the Governor pointed to the orchids as he said:

"You may have some idea of it from these flowers. We are down here in the tropics and we have a tropical climate. Our average temperature ranges from seventy to ninety degrees, and as a rule it is not far from eighty degrees the year round. You are now here in the dry season, but in the wet we have a rainfall which is about 145 inches at Colon, and about seventy-five inches here at Panama. If all the water that falls at Colon in one year should drop on the level and not flow away it would make a lake more than twelve feet in depth. During the dry season, which lasts from January to April, there is almost no rain, and you need no umbrella, unless you wish it for protection from the sun."

"As a result of this heavy rainfall," continued the Governor, "everything grows luxuriantly, and some parts of the country are covered with jungle. Others are grassy, like the savannas outside of Ancon. The hills are all wooded, and we have palm trees, bamboos, bananas and tropical plants of every description. Indeed, this whole territory is like a botanical garden."

## Lands of the Zone.

"Are the lands good for farming?" "Not for farming as we know it in the States. They are better fitted for fruit raising. Some of them might be turned into sugar or rubber plantations, and most of the land will produce oranges, bananas, 'alligator pears,' plantains, lemons, limes,

pineapples and all sorts of tropical vegetables. We have here the yam, which is sometimes like the sweet potato, and grows as long as one's arm, and the yucca, a tuber which grows as large as one's head, and tastes much like an Irish potato. Up-land rice has been grown here to some extent, and both the coconut and cacao trees thrive."

"Does not most of the land belong to the natives?"

"No," replied Governor Thatcher, "only a small portion is owned by them. The greater part of it is the property of the United States Government, its ownership including the land of the Panama Railroad Company. Some of the land is taken up by the canal, but other portions are wild and unused. About 3,500 acres of this government land are now under lease, and about \$20,000 a year has been collected in rents; but the rents will be less from now on, as Gatun lake and other canal encroachments reduce the area to be leased. The rent for government lands for cultivation is a little over a dollar an acre."

"Who do the farming?" I asked.

"There is practically no farming to speak of. The higher prices for labor on the canal prevent any extensive work on plantations or ranches. The natives have little patches surrounding their shacks, each family raising a few bananas, mangoes and other tropical fruits, sometimes a little sugar cane and usually some yuccas, yams and other tropical vegetables. The natives live for the most part on what they produce in this way, and carry the surplus over the trails or haul it by boat to market. A part of the work of civil administration is to keep these trails open. We are now clearing the trails preparatory to the taking of a zone census."

"Macadamized roads are also being built through the zone," the Governor went on. "We now have a good automobile road running along the line of the canal from Panama to Gorgona, about twenty miles. This road cannot be extended beyond Gorgona, since Gatun lake, as it will be ultimately formed, will extend to Gorgona and cover nearly all the area between Gorgona and Gatun. On the Atlantic side there is a macadamized road from Gatun to Colon, a distance of about seven and one-half miles."

"Tell me something of the people who are now living on the zone."

"Most of them are laborers engaged in the canal work. Nearly every race and locality of the globe is represented. There are Chinamen, East Indians, natives of South and Central America, and tens of thousands of negroes from the islands of the Caribbean sea. Most of the silver employees are from Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, St. Kitts, Martinique, and others of the West Indian islands. These people are English-speaking, for the most part, although those from Martinique speak French, and we have some Spanish-speaking negroes from Colombia and Venezuela. We have Spaniards from the northern part of the Iberian peninsula, and also Italians, Greeks, Armenians and men of other nationalities."

"How many whites have you?"

"About 15,000. Of these, 5,000 are Americans engaged on the canal. This includes the engineers, high-grade mechanics and clerical employees. Another 5,000 of the whites are the wives and children of the American employees, and in addition we have about 5,000 white European laborers."

"How many negroes have you?"

"Nearly 60,000, I should say."

## How Law and Order Are Kept.

"But is not such a varied population hard to control? I should think it would be very much like that of a mining camp in the wilds of our west or of a construction gang which is building a railroad through a new country. If that population were in the United States everything would be wide open. There would be faro games, poker games and roulette; the zone would be peppered with saloons, and it would be very unsafe to go about after dark. How is it here?"

"There is no comparison between our conditions and those which you have described," said the Governor. "We have no public gambling in this part of Uncle Sam's territory. I doubt whether you can find as good order in any city of the United States as right here in these settlements along the canal. You must remember that the most of our workmen are single men. They have their quarters free and they live in camps or barracks near where they work. The lights in those barracks go out every night at 9 o'clock, and every one is compelled to be quiet, so that the others may sleep. The fact that married quarters have been generally provided for white American employees and their families, I believe, has greatly

aided in establishing stable social conditions."

## How the Zone Is Policed.

"But does it not require a large police force to keep the people in order?"

"No. Our policemen are men of experience. The chief is Col. J. P. Fyffe and the assistant chief is Capt. C. W. Barber of the United States Army. Both men have had military experience, and the force is handled somewhat along military lines. We have nearly 300 policemen all told. One-half of these are white Americans and are chiefly ex-soldiers of the United States Army. The other half are blacks who have served in the police and military forces of the West Indian islands and have made good records there. As a result our policemen are trained to obey, and they are efficient in their work. The black policemen receive in pay almost three times as much here as they received in the British service, and they are pleased with their jobs. They are used chiefly in handling the black population of the zone. I believe one feature of our police service which makes it more easy to preserve law and order here is the respect which the laborers have for the police. Our police officers are held in much the same regard as are the famous mounted policemen of Canada. One or two of our policemen will go into a camp of 200 or 300 blacks or Spaniards and make an arrest without the necessity of clubbing any one. This would not be possible in many parts of the United States."

## The Arrests Per Month.

"It may be that the population is better than ours?"

"I believe that much of our good order is due to the way the men are handled. Now, here is last month's report, which shows the arrests which were made among twenty-odd thousand people in the zone. The total number of arrests was 538, and of the offenders arrested 487 were men and 51 women. Now, note the nationalities. They come from fifty different countries. Here are 97 from Jamaica, 132 from Barbados, 15 from Trinidad and 21 from Martinique, 48 from Spain, 38 from Panama and 46 from the United States; 7 are from British Guiana, 6 from Fortune Island, 3 from India and 8 from China. Among the others are Cubans, Germans, Greeks, Italians and Mexicans, 1 from Finland, 1 from Tunis in north Africa and 1 from New Zealand. This gives you some idea of our mixed population."

"What are the offenses?"

"They are mostly petty ones. A number are for violation of the sanitary and revenue laws, some for cruelty to animals, some for fighting and drunkenness and other forms of disorder, a few for non-support of wives and families, two or three are for homicide, some for burglary, 21 are for vagrancy, 2 for cock fighting, and included in the total are the arrests of 5 soldiers for being absent without leave."

## The Jails and Prisons of the Zone.

"What do you do with these men after you arrest them?"

"If they are unable to give bond we put them in jail and have them tried in our zone courts. We have a penitentiary at Culebra and jails at the various towns on the zone. The penitentiary is a model of its kind. The prisoners are credited with good conduct and they can thus shorten their terms of imprisonment. They are also graded and clothed according to conduct, and we find this has greatly improved the prison discipline and the efficiency of prison labor. We now have 145 convicts in the penitentiary. Two are in for life, 7 for ten years or more, 21 have received five-year sentences, 29 two-year sentences and about 50 have been sentenced for one year. We employ the convicts in the construction of public roads, and the results are excellent."

"What is the future of the social conditions at the ends of the canal? Will Panama and Colon be pious towns or will they turn into hotbeds of vice like Suez and Port Said, the two pestholes at the ends of the Suez canal?"

"I believe they will be far different from the towns on the Suez canal," said the Governor of the zone. "Under our arrangement with the Panamanian government we have joint jurisdiction with it as to immigration, and it is the policy of the two governments to work together to exclude vicious characters. Of course, there is some wickedness going on in the cities at the two ends of the canal, but the effort has been to minimize it. Undesirable characters from all over the world are attracted here because of the canal work and the large sums of money being paid out, and they would overrun these cities except for watchfulness in the matter of immigration. The act of Congress makes it unlawful to bring into or through the Canal Zone women for immoral purposes, and we are keeping them out of the zone and are doing everything possible to assist in keeping this evil within bounds in the two cities. We have recently secured two convictions in the Canal Zone courts against 'white-slave' traders who had attempted to bring women through the zone into the city of Panama. These convictions have had a very salutary effect. 'White-slave' traffic through the port of Co-

lon has been practically broken up, and if its victims get into the city of Panama they must come in small boats or must journey overland. Either course is a difficult one. Practically all the ships coming into Panama on the Pacific side make port at Balboa, the zone harbor, and we prevent 'undesirables' from landing from such ships. A short time ago we arrested a white-slave trader and secured his conviction on the charge of having violated in the Canal Zone the 'white-slave' law, and he was sentenced to twenty-one months' imprisonment in the zone penitentiary at Culebra. He had plenty of money, and by the aid of confederates on the outside he was enabled to saw his way out and escaped. We captured him, however, on a boat near the Colombian coast. On his return to prison he expressed his disgust with the Canal Zone; he said he had been in the 'white-slave' trade for more than twenty years, had operated in many countries, and he had been able to 'fix' matters with public officials everywhere but here. We regarded that statement as quite a compliment to official conditions here."

## A Word About the Courts.

"How about the courts of Uncle Sam down here?"

"We have a good judiciary. There are district courts, circuit courts and a supreme court. We have a counsel and chief attorney, prosecuting attorney and an assistant prosecuting attorney, and a number of attorneys have been admitted to practice in the various courts. Last year between five and six thousand criminal cases were handled, and over 4,000 of the defendants were convicted. About 1,300 civil cases were handled, most of these being of a minor character."

## Public Works and the Schools.

"What other divisions are there in the department of civil administration?"

"Several. We inspect all vessels coming into zone waters, and this work is performed by a board of inspectors. There is also a division of posts, customs and revenue. Our postal service issues money orders to the amount of over \$5,000,000 a year. We are now installing a postal savings system. Annually, between sixty and seventy thousand mail pouches and sacks are handled on the railway which runs across the isthmus. We collect all taxes and issue all licenses. There are some saloons on the zone, and the men who conduct them pay a license of \$100 a month each. Saloons are run mostly by Chinese, and are orderly places. Our division of fire protection will, I believe, compare in efficiency with any in the States."

Then we have a division of public works, which operates not only in the zone, but also maintains the water, street and sewer systems in the cities of Panama and Colon and collects all the water rentals of these cities, the same going to repay the United States for the cost of constructing these systems. We also have a zone treasurer and a zone auditor. And there is the division of schools, which provides educational facilities for children of the zone equal to those provided in the best graded schools of the States. We have a high school at Gatun, to which children from all zone points are transported by railroad, and a subsidiary high school at Ancon. Indeed, we have all the branches which are characteristic of a territorial government."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

# FARMERS UNION AND POLITICS

President Alexander Says No, Except As to Men; a Closely Censored Report of Meeting of Mecklenburg Union

Charlotte, May 4.—A closely censored report of the meeting of the Mecklenburg Farmers' Union this afternoon, prepared in part by Dr. H. Q. Alexander, State head of the Union, makes a vigorous denial that the Union is in politics, but declares that the organization does stand for measures, but not men. President Alexander has given out a lengthy statement on the tendency, as he sees it, of democratic rule in the country falling into a monarchical form by the control of legislation by classes. He sets forth the attitude of the Union at length on this subject.

## TWO CHAPTERS WERE

ISSUED SATURDAY. Two chapters were issued yesterday as follows:

J. A. Dunning, incorporated, of Alexander, Bertie county, to manufacture and deal in brick, etc.; authorized capital, \$3,000, with \$1,000 subscribed for by J. A. Dunning, A. R. Dunning, H. W. Gatling and others.

Central Lumber Company, of Forest City, Rutherford county, authorized capital, \$50,000, with \$7,000 paid in by W. W. Hicks, C. M. Young, A. B. Price, B. C. Moore and others.